

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-6, 9, 10, and 12-20 are currently pending in the present application, with Claims 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, and 13-20 being amended and Claims 2, 7, and 11 being canceled. Reconsideration and reexamination of the claims are respectfully requested.

The Examiner rejected Claims 17-20 under 35 U.S.C. 101 as being directed to non-statutory subject matter. Applicants have amended the claims to more clearly recite the subject matter being claimed, and submit that the amended claims are directed to patentable subject matter.

The Examiner rejected Claims 1, 3-6, 8-10, and 12-20 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kanda (U.S. Patent Pub. No. US 2001/0041049 A1) in view of Yamauchi (U.S. Patent No. 5,956,090). This rejection is respectfully traversed with respect to the amended claims.

Applicants note that the Examiner indicated as allowable Claims 2, 7, and 11 if rewritten into independent claims. Applicants have amended Claims 1, 5, and 10 to substantially incorporate the subject matter of Claims 2, 7, and 11, respectively. The subject matter of Claims 2, 7, and 11 have also been substantially incorporated into Claims 17-20, respectively, and the subject matter of Claim 2 has been incorporated substantially into Claim 13. Additional amendments were made to place the claims in better condition for allowance.

In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the outstanding rejection of the claims and to pass this application to issue. If it is determined that a telephone conference would expedite the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number given below.

In the event the U.S. Patent and Trademark office determines that an extension and/or other relief is required, applicant petitions for any required relief including extensions of time and authorizes the Commissioner to charge the cost of such petitions and/or other fees due in connection with the filing of this document to Deposit Account No. 03-1952 referencing docket no. 393032039400. However, the Commissioner is not authorized to charge the cost of the issue fee to the Deposit Account.

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Respectfully submitted,

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